

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, TU
SUBJECT: FAREWELL CALL ON PRESIDENT KORUTURK

1. ON JUNE 13 I PAID FAREWELL CALL ON PRESIDENT KORUTURK. IN OUR DISCUSSION WHICH WAS PRIMARILY OF A PERSONAL CHARACTER, HE REVIEWED THE DIFFICULT TIMES AND INTERESTING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WE HAD SHARED TOGETHER DURING MY PERIOD HERE. ON SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS, THE PRESIDENT INDICATED THAT HE WAS NOT REPEAT NOT PREPARED TO SAY ANTHING MORE ABOUT US/TURKISH RELATIONS BECAUSE TURKEY'S VIEWS HAD BEEN MADE VERY CLEAR TO THE PRESIDENT'S EMISSARY, SECRETARY CLIFFORD, AND SUBSEQUENTLY TO THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF IN LONDON, AND NOW THE TIME TIME HAD COME TO WAIT AND SEE WHAT THE RESULTS WOULD BE. THE PRESIDENT ALSO SPOKE OF HIS GREAT SATISFACTION OVER TURKEY'S HAVING SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED ANOTHER FREE ELECTION. HE TOOK GREAT PRIDE IN THIS AND SAID THAT GIVEN THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED, IT WAS A CONSIDERABLE ACHIEVEMENT ON THE PART OF THE TURKISH PEOPLE. HE SAID HE DOUBTED THAT TURKEY'S POLITICAL LEADERS WOULD DO AS WELL, AND FELT THERE WAS AT LEAST A POSSIBILITY THAT IT MIGHT BE SOME TIME BEFORE A NEW GOVERNMENT EMERGED. TURKEY HAD BEEN THROUGH THIS BEFORE, HOWEVER, AND HAD AVOIDED COUPS, AND HAD KEPT THE COUNTRY RUNNING AND COULD DO SO AGAIN. AT SUCH TIMES,

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HE NOTED, THE PRESIDENCY GATHERS TURKEY'S EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY TO ITSELF, AND THIS IS A CONSIDERABLE HELP IN GETTING TURKEY THROUGH A HIATUS PERIOD UNTIL A NEW GOVERNMENT IS FORMED. HE MADE IT VERY CLEAR THAT IF TURKEY RAN INTO A DELAY WITH RESPECT TO FORMING A NEW GOVERNMENT, SIMILAR TO WHAT IT HAD EXPERIENCED DURING THE LAST TWO GOVERNMENT CHANGES, HE WAS PREPARED TO AGAIN PLAY THIS SIMILAR ROLE.

2. FOR MY PART, I CONGRATULATED THE PRESIDENT ON TURKEY'S ACHIEVING ANOTHER FREE ELECTION. I ALSO ASSURED HIM THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION WAS VERY DESIROUS OF STRAIGHTENING OUT U.S. RELATIONSHIPS WITH TURKEY, AND I EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE NEW TURKISH GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE STEPS WHICH COULD HELP THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION IN THIS MUTUALLY IMPORTANT UNDERTAKING.

3. MY MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT WAS SOMEWHAT PROLONGED IN ITS CONCLUDING STAGES BECAUSE I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR FROM HIS OWN LIPS HOW HE HAD RECEIVED HIS NAME MANY YEARS AGO FROM KEMAL ATATURK HIMSELF. IT WAS AT A TIME WHEN ATATURK WAS TELLING ALL TURKS TO ADOPT SURNAMES (NOT EARLIER THE TURKISH CUSTOM), AND THE STORY, AS KORUTURK TOLD IT TO ME, IS THIS.

IN 1935, AS A VERY YOUNG AND IMPOVERISHED NAVAL LIEUTENANT, KORUTURK, IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES WAS SITTING ALONE AT A TABLE IN KARPIC'S, WHICH, AS ALL OLD TURKISH HANDS KNOW, WAS A FAMOUS ANKARA EATING PLACE NO LONGER IN EXISTENCE. HE WAS EATING QUITE A LIMITED MEAL AS THIS WAS ALL HE COULD AFFORD. SHORTLY AFTER HE STARTED, ATATURK AND A NUMBER OF HIS FRIENDS CAME TO KARPIC'S AND SAT DOWN AT A TABLE NEAR HIM. BECAUSE KORUTURK HAD A VERY FAIR COMPLEXION, A DISCUSSION BEGAN AT THE ATATURK TABLE AS TO WHETHER THEIR YOUNG NEIGHBOR WAS A EUROPEAN OR A TURK. ALL OF ATATURK'S COLLEAGUES THOUGHT HE WAS A EUROPEAN, BUT ATATURK CALLED ATTENTION TO THE MEAGER MEAL HE HAD ORDERED AND SAID THAT HE WAS SURE THIS MEANT HE WAS A "POOR TURK". TO SETTLE THE ARGUMENT, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ATATURK SENT AN AIDE AND ASKED THE YOUNG KORUTURK TO JOIN THEM AT THE TABLE. HE WAS ASKED IF HE SPOKE ANY FOREIGN LANGUAGES. KORUTURK REPLIED THAT HE SPOKE SOME GERMAN. FOR A TIME THEN ATATURK'S PARTY TALKED TO HIM IN GERMAN THROUGH ONE OF ATATURK'S COLLEAGUES WHO SPOKE GOOD GERMAN, AS DID KORUTURK. FINALLY, HOWEVER, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT KORUTURK WAS NOT A GERMAN, BUT A TURK (IN FACT, HE WAS NO MORE FAIR OR EUROPEAN-LOOKING THAN ATATURK HIMSELF). AT THAT POINT, ATATURK TALKED TO HIM ABOUT THE REFORMS THAT HE AND HIS ASSOCIATES WERE BRINGING TO TURKEY. ATATURK SAID THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR THE ULTIMATE SUCCESS OF THESE REFORMS, FOR THE YOUTH OF TURKEY TO REMAIN COMMITTED TO THEM, AND IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH HIS YOUNG GUEST, HE TOLD HIM THAT AS A MEMBER OF THAT YOUTHFUL GENERATION, HE WAS COUNTING ON HIS SUPPORT.

4. KORUTURK SAID HE WAS VERY NERVOUS DURING THE CONVERSATION BECAUSE IT WAS INTERMIXED WITH A RIGOROUS QUESTIONING OF HIM BY ATATURK. (WHAT KORUTURK DID NOT

TELL ME, BUT WHAT I HAVE HEARD FROM OTHER SOURCES, IS THAT YOUNG KORUTURK'S ANSWERS WERE VERY IMPRESSIVE TO THE TURKISH LEADER). IN ANY EVENT, WHEN THE CONVERSATION WAS DONE, ATATURK ORDERED THAT THE MEAL "OF A RICH MAN" BE SENT TO KORUTURK'S TABLE IN SUBSTITUTION FOR THE MEAGER FARE THAT ATATURK HAD ORIGINALLY OBSERVED THERE. ALSO, IN REFERENCE TO WHAT HE HAD SAID ABOUT THE NEXT GENERATION'S OBLIGATION TO CARRY ON HIS REFORMS, HE ON THE SPOT GAVE KORUTURK HIS PRESENT NAME, WHICH MEANS "PROTECTOR OF THE TURKS."

5. I WAS PLEASED TO HEAR THIS STORY DIRECTLY FROM ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED BY THE FACT THAT 42 YEARS AGO, ATATURK HAD, AT THIS CHANCE RESTAURANT ENCOUNTER, MET, BEFRIENDED AND NAMED THE OBSCURE YOUNG MAN WHO WOULD ONE DAY SUCCEED HIM AS HEAD OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC.

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